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ABSTRACT

Prior to changing from a manual/time sharing circulation system to an online system with an in-house computer, the staff of the Mary and John Gray Library of Lamar University reevaluated their current circulation policies in light of the increased capabilities of the new system. As part of this process, a survey was conducted of the libraries in 11 state-supported universities of similar size to obtain information on their lending practices for students, faculty, and non-university patrons. In each case, the person in charge of the circulation department was interviewed by telephone, and printed brochures were obtained from libraries having written policy statements. It was found that most of the libraries were using the capabilities of their computer-based systems to exert greater control over some areas of student borrowing than is possible with manual systems, but were retaining a liberal policy toward faculty. All of the libraries had policies allowing for the issuance of cards to adult residents of the area, but imposed restrictions in order to limit such cards to responsible persons. Most had arrangements for direct borrowing by students of other colleges, but the majority either did not lend to high school students, or restricted such lending to students enrolled in special programs. A copy of the questionnaire and a list of the libraries surveyed are appended. (THC)

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A Survey of Circulation Policies
Eleven Texas Universities
February, 1985

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Purpose and Scope of the Survey

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During the Spring Semester, 1985, the staff of the Mary and John Gray Library of Lamar University has been evaluating bids for an on-line circulation system with an in-house computer. The new system would replace a combination manual/time sharing system whereby charge and discharge data are stored during the day in the University's Honeywell computer and batch-processed at night. The increased capability for control of circulation processes offered by an on-line system has caused reconsideration of policies which, in many cases, were shaped by the limitations of the old system. As part of the reevaluation process, it was thought that a survey of actual practices of libraries at state-supported universities of similar size would be useful. In addition to lending practices for students and faculty, one other area of particular interest to the Circulation Department was investigated: borrowing by non-university patrons.

The following survey of eleven university libraries was conducted by telephone from January 29 - February 5, 1985. In each case, the person interviewed was the Circulation Librarian or other person in charge of the Circulation Department. Also, telephone interviews were supplemented by printed brochures from those libraries having written policy statements.

Of the eleven libraries surveyed, eight have some type of computer-based system, either in-house or commercial. Capabilities of the systems are varied. The remaining three libraries have manual systems but are

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seeking to go on-line and are at some stage of the bidding process. Of these three, one has not attempted to set any limits on borrowing; one does have limits, though not enforceable; and one indicated the intention to set certain limits with an on-line system. It should be noted, also, that the fact that a block was stated to be in effect for certain limits does not indicate the firmness of enforcement. In some cases, the block might be absolute; in others, it might be simply a warning to the patron of the existence of a delinquent condition.

Results of the Survey

The first category of policies surveyed was that of limits on student borrowing. Under consideration here is current borrowing, in contrast to a system of clearances at the end of a semester.*

TABLE 1

REASONS FOR BLOCKS ON STUDENT BORROWING

Reason for Block	Number
Too many books currently charged	4
Overdue books	7
Fines	7
Items lost/not paid	6
Renewal limit exceeded	2
No Blocks on Student Borrowing	2

Most of the libraries surveyed had no limits on the number of books currently charged to a student, and one of the others had a high limit

*All the libraries have a traditional clearance system, whereby students are required to clear their records before re-enrolling or withdrawing from the university.

of 100. However, a majority of the libraries do block student borrowing for overdue books, fines due and lost and unpaid-for items. Seven block student borrowing for overdue books or fines due; six block for lost items.* None of the libraries block borrowing when a threshold of value for items charged out is exceeded, although some indicated that their systems are capable of that function. One librarian suggested that such limits would be extremely difficult to set because of the variation in cost of materials among subject fields. As for renewals, nine of the libraries had unlimited renewal with provision for recall of requested items; two had a one-time limit.

In contrast to policies on student borrowing, faculty borrowing policies of the eleven libraries are quite liberal.

TABLE 2
REASONS FOR BLOCKS ON
FACULTY BORROWING

Reason for Block	Number
Too many books currently charged	1
Overdue books	1
Items lost/not paid	4
No Blocks on Faculty Borrowing	6

Six of the libraries enforce no blocks at all on faculty borrowing. Only one library has a limit on the number of books faculty may have currently charged, and the librarian questioned indicated that this block is frequently overridden. Also, only one library blocks faculty

*The other libraries wait until end of the semester to declare a book lost, then use a clearance system.

borrowing for overdue books. Even for faculty having items lost and not paid, most of the libraries (seven of eleven) do not block current borrowing. Some attempt to enforce clearances at the end of the semester, but most report difficulty in getting faculty to clear their records, and reluctance on the part of their library administration to set limits of any kind.

The problem of lending to graduate students who are also teaching assistants was also addressed in the survey. The libraries are divided in their approach: six view teaching assistants as faculty and allow an extended loan period, while five view them as students and do not. Of the six allowing extended loan, two require special permission from the department chairman, and one limits this privilege to material in the teaching field only.

Special Library Card

All eleven university libraries surveyed issue some type of special library card to non-university patrons. This card might be called a special, courtesy, patron or public card.

TABLE 3
REQUIREMENTS FOR
SPECIAL LIBRARY CARD

Requirement	Number
Resident of area	9
18 years or older	9
Payment of fee	8
Driver's license	3
Valid need	2
Other	1

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Of the eleven, nine restrict this card to adults (or more specifically, persons 18 years of age and older); one library issues cards to anyone with a driver's license, and one will issue cards to children. Nine of the libraries enforce some type of residence requirement, either as a number of miles radius or by counties. Three of the libraries also require a driver's license. Two specified that applicants must demonstrate a "valid need." One library limits the card to two special groups: area school teachers and naval base personnel.

Eight of the eleven libraries charge some type of fee for the card. Six of the eight have a one-time charge of \$5.00 to \$25.00; two have a yearly fee. One library which does not charge a fee will not renew a card if there are any outstanding fines or overdues. Seven of the libraries have set some kind of limit on the number of items charged. In three cases where a limit was set, the intent was to charge a fee which would cover replacement cost of two or three items.

Six of the libraries do not lend to high school students and are firm with this rule.

TABLE 4
LENDING TO
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Policy	Number
Prohibit lending	6
Allow lending to special groups	2
Allow lending to those with driver's license	2
Allow lending to all	1

Of the other five, two restrict lending to special categories of high school students, such as University Interscholastic League competitors

or those in special advanced programs; two will lend to such students if they have a driver's license; and one has no age restriction.

As for lending to students of other colleges, seven of the eleven libraries allow for some type of direct student borrowing. Four of these

TABLE 5
REQUIREMENTS FOR LENDING TO
STUDENTS OF OTHER COLLEGES

Requirement	Number
Home college member of consortium	4
Resident of area only	1
Driver's license only	1
Valid need only (rarely)	1
No Special requirement	1
Do Not Lend	3

are members of cooperative systems - either CORAL (Council of Research and Academic Libraries), or AHE (the Association for Higher Education) - which allow for faculty and/or students to borrow materials from all libraries in the system. CORAL students are issued an authorization card which is presented with the student identification card in order to borrow at other colleges. There is a limit of four items charged at one time on this card. The Association for Higher Education is a consortium of large universities in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area. Each school has its own policies about issuing a library card to be used at member schools, but this privilege is generally restricted to faculty and graduate students. The remaining three libraries lending to students of other schools have very liberal policies. One requires that the student be 18 years old, have a driver's license, and live within a 100-mile radius. One requires only

a driver's license, and the third has no restrictions. Of the remaining libraries, one will occasionally issue a special card to a student of another college if he has a need for extensive research. The other three libraries limit their lending to conventional interlibrary loan procedures.

Summary

In summary, most of the libraries surveyed are utilizing capabilities of their computer-based systems to exert greater control over some areas of student borrowing than is possible with a manual system, but are retaining a liberal policy toward faculty. Students are not being limited by number or value of books currently charged or as to number of renewals, but are being stopped for overdues, unpaid fines, and lost items. In contrast, the majority of the libraries are not placing blocks on faculty borrowing. Even for lost and unpaid-for items, only four libraries reported a block for faculty. The libraries are divided as to allowing a faculty loan period for teaching assistants. Six allow an extended loan period, while five do not.

As for lending to non-university patrons, all of the libraries have policies allowing for the issuance of cards to adult residents of the area. Certain restrictions are imposed in an attempt to limit such cards to responsible persons - an age requirement, possession of a driver's license, statement of a "valid need," and the payment of a fee. In addition seven of the libraries are attempting to control losses by imposing a limit on the number of items to be borrowed at one time by special patrons. Also, most have some type of arrangement for direct borrowing by students of other colleges. However, the majority of the libraries either do not lend to high school students, or restrict such lending to students enrolled in special programs for the academically talented.

Appendix 1
Questionnaire

1. Do you restrict student borrowing privileges for any of the following reasons? (Please indicate any which apply.)
☐ a. Too many books currently charged
☐ b. Too many overdue books
☐ c. Fine threshold exceeded
☐ d. Value of items currently charged exceeds threshold
☐ e. Excessive number or value of items lost and not paid
2. Please indicate limits and restrictions of borrowing privileges for items checked in question 1.
3. Do you restrict faculty borrowing privileges for any of the following reasons?
☐ a. Too many books currently charged
☐ b. Too many overdue books
☐ c. Value of items currently charged exceeds threshold
☐ d. Excessive number or value of items lost and not paid
4. Please indicate limits and restrictions of borrowing privileges for items checked in question 3.
5. Which of the following categories of patrons may charge materials for at-home use?
☐ a. Adult community citizens
☐ b. Students of other colleges
☐ c. High school students
☐ d. Friends of the Library
☐ e. Families of Friends of the Library
6. Please indicate loan periods and restrictions for any categories checked in question 5.
7. Do teaching assistants have the privilege of extended loan periods? ☐. If yes, does this privilege apply to all materials, or to only those items in their teaching field?
8. Do you block renewals in either of the following cases?
☐ a. Item already renewed maximum times
☐ b. Certain types of material or subject classes
(Please specify.)

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Appendix 2

University Libraries Surveyed

1. East Texas State University
James Gilliam Gee Library
Commerce, Texas
2. Midwestern State University
George Moffett Library
Wichita Falls, Texas
3. Pan American University
Learning Resource Center
Edinburg, Texas
4. Sam Houston State University
Library
Huntsville, Texas
5. Southwest Texas State University
Learning Resources Center
San Marcos, Texas
6. Stephen F. Austin State University
Ralph W. Steen Library
Nacogdoches, Texas
7. Texas A and I University
James C. Jernigan Library
Kingsville, Texas
8. Texas Woman's University
Bralley Memorial Library
Denton, Texas
9. University of Texas at Arlington
Library
Arlington, Texas
10. University of Texas at El Paso
Library
El Paso, Texas
11. West Texas State University
Cornette Library
Canyon, Texas